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Marais des Cygnes Massacre
Mine Creek Battlefield
Native American Heritage Museum
Pawnee Indian Village
Pawnee Rock
Shawnee Mission

Certification of State Register Listing

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: SPRING HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
Address: 103- 118 SOUTH MAIN STREET, SPRING HILL
County: JOHNSON
Legal: SEE ATTACHED, PART SEVEN
Owner: SEE ATTACHED, PART SEVEN
Address: SEE ATTACHED, PART SEVEN

National Register eligible

State Register eligible XXXXXX

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on DECEMBER 9, 2000.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.


Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

12-11-00
Date

NORTH

CANNON BALL HIGHWAY

ALSO CALLED JEFFERSON HIGHWAY

40

39

54

53

52

36

37

MISSOURI RIVER, FT. SCOTT & MEMPHIS LINE RAILROAD (FRISCO RAILROAD)

RAILROAD AVENUE

41

42

45

44

43

Nichols Street

35

34

33

32

31

30

22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

CHERRY STREET (Later Hale St.)

29 28

23 24 25

26 26b

27

MAIN STREET

47

46

UNION STREET - - - Later changed to

48

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

50

49

CHERRY STREET (Later Changed to Hale Street)

PINE STREET

55

51

98

EST

Spring Hill Downtown Historic District

Part 7: Description

The Spring Hill Downtown Historic District (ca. 1886 to 1928) is located in Spring Hill, Kansas (population 3,650). The city of Spring Hill is approximately twenty miles southwest of metropolitan Kansas City in rural southern Johnson County. Actually located on the Johnson-Miami county line approximately eight miles south of the county seat in Olathe, Spring Hill is bypassed on the west by U.S. 169 Highway. The nominated district contains a total of sixteen commercial brick buildings, built predominantly during three major building periods (1886-1888, 1896, and 1903-1905), and one modern commercial building. This concentration lines both the east and west sides of Main Street, a north to south thoroughfare, along a one block area between what is now Nichols Street (an east to west thoroughfare) to the north and Hale Street (an east to west thoroughfare) to the south. For the purposes of this nomination, the district's period of significance has been identified as beginning in 1886, when the first building boom commenced, and concluding in 1928, when the district's largest business closed. During these years, the properties which comprise the nominated district were the commercial and social heart of Spring Hill and the surrounding rural areas.

Characteristic of small downtown business districts constructed in the late 19th and early 20th century, both the east and west sides of Main Street consist primarily of a contiguous row of what architectural historian Richard Longstreth refers to as "one-part" brick commercial buildings. Examples of these "one-part commercial blocks" constructed much before 1900 are now somewhat rare in areas where pressure from development is increasing. (Longstreth, 55). Although built nearly identical, of the six contiguous "one-part" properties on the east side of Main and the seven contiguous "one-part" properties on the west side, nine retain a moderate to high degree of architectural integrity. Therefore, these nine buildings have been identified as key contributors to the nominated district because alterations are minimal and because they demonstrate stylistic characteristics which make them good representations of a turn of the century "one-part commercial block." Four of the "one-parts" have been identified as non-contributing; two buildings have reversible façade alterations and two are irreversibly altered.

Three buildings within the nominated district boundaries are what Longstreth calls "two-part" brick commercial buildings. In conjunction with a non-extant "two-part," these buildings located on each corner of Main between Nichols and Hale, anchored the downtown district as bookends around the two rows of "one-parts." Two of these buildings have been identified as key contributors to the nominated district because alterations are minimal and because they demonstrate stylistic characteristics which make them good representations of turn of the century "two-part" commercial buildings. One of the "two-parts" is identified as non-contributing because it was rebuilt after the stated period of significance. The one modern commercial structure on Main has been excluded from the nominated district because it too was constructed after the stated period of significance.

Platted as Sprague's Addition Block 5 (west side of Main) and Block 2 (east side of Main) in 1870, the one block Spring Hill Downtown Historic District is shown in the 1874 *Atlas of*

Johnson County with sixteen commercial frame structures. All but one of the frame structures on the east side of Main were demolished by 1888 while a fire in 1896 destroyed the remaining seven on the west side. The eleven key contributing brick "one-part" and "two-part" commercial buildings in the nominated district were constructed in three distinct building periods: 1886-1888, 1896, and 1903-1905.

The two key contributing examples of the "two-part" commercial building style are the Hogue building at 102 S. Main and the Spring Hill Banking Company and Masonic building at 123 S. Main. Built in 1886 and 1903-04 respectively of brick construction by local contractors, they retain their overall architectural character despite alterations on the first floor. The "two-part commercial block" was the most common form of commercial architecture for small to medium sized buildings in the United States and often dominated the commercial core of small cities and towns. Though different stylistically, in regard to massing, these "two-part" structures are typical of the commercial design in the late Victorian era of the early 1900s, in that: (1) the two stories are exaggerated; (2) there is a tendency toward harmonization of treatment between stories; and (3) there is restraint in ornamentation. (Longstreth, 31, 39).

The Hogue building on the corner of Nichols and Main, which has always housed a hardware store, is the oldest extant commercial building in the district. The practical façade, on the west elevation facing Main street, is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass in the lower portion and plain brick upper façade with minimal decoration. The builders placed two cast iron engaged columns, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, on either side of the door way and an accompanying cast iron riser, along the length of the western façade. Two large rectangular multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, in-between the engaged columns, flank the centered, entry doors and two side lights inside a small entry portico. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The exaggerated wall area above the windows and portico consists of a large brick area, interrupted by three vertical windows which are embellished with brick relieving arches and surrounds. The frieze employs brick corbelling. On the second floor is an elevator, of predominately wooden construction, used when the store carried farm implements during the district's period of significance. The elevator is operated with a large pulley and rope (extant) as nail kegs filled with square nails, parts of stoves, and farm machinery were used as counter-balance weight.

Completed in early 1904, the Spring Hill Banking Company and Masonic building is stylistically similar to typical bank and fraternal hall architecture in the Victorian era in its restraint in ornamentation. The building's façades, on the east elevation facing Main Street and south elevation facing Hale Street, are comprised of brick. The cornice of this Italianate building is created by corbelling the dentil course and using a panelled architrave. The symmetrically placed windows on both the first and second floor and the entry doorway are embellished with decorative brick relieving arches and surrounds with minimal Victorian details.

The nine key contributing examples of the "one-part commercial block" style were constructed of brick by local contractors during three periods. On the east side of Main, 104, 106, and 108 S. Main were built between 1887-1888. On the west side of Main, 107, 109, 113

and 115 (same building), 117, and 121 S. Main were built as a contiguous block in 1896 after a fire destroyed nearly the entire block of frame buildings that year. Back on the east side, 110 S. Main was built in 1905 after a fire destroyed the original brick structure earlier that year. Cumulatively, they are excellent representations of turn of the century commercial architectural sensibilities applied to small towns. Most 19th century "one-parts" were retail stores with Victorian details often found only on banks. However, around 1900 even Victorian details on banks were minimized to more closely resemble retail stores in order to promote more unity and restraint in commercial districts. By the early 20th century, "one-parts" were consistently being configured in an orderly arrangement and "most examples from this period have few if any historical references." (Longstreth, 62). In general, there was little decoration between the windows and cornice because simplicity of design and practicality was replacing Victorian ornamentation, which was increasingly being considered pretentious on small urban buildings.

Though built over an eighteen year period, the nine "one-parts," which all retain their overall architectural character despite alterations to the interiors, share similar stylistic features and massing. They are all of a single story, simple box style with a minimally decorated, nearly seamless, contiguous façade. The elevation facing Main street is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass. For eight of the "one-parts," two cast iron engaged columns, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, on either side of the door way attach to an accompanying cast iron riser to complete the frame of a centered recessed portico. Two large vertical multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flank the centered entry door and two side lights inside the portico. Above the door is a transom window with mullion. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The wall area above the windows and portico are decorated with either a pyramidal, embrasure, or relief patterned brickwork cornice. Local contractor Orville Markley did the stone and brick work and laid the foundations for all the buildings on the west side while Tom Brown and George Reeder furnished the stone. Charles Thomas, from a gravel roofing company in Kansas City, put gravel and asphaltum roofs on all the west side buildings with gravel hauled in on the railroad (nonextant).

In September 1898, Spring Hill drilled a commercial natural gas well and began piping the gas all over town. In December, gas lines were run along either side of Main and the first businesses in the nominated district were equipped for gas heat and light. By the end of 1899, eleven gas street lights had been installed along Main Street (nonextant) and the last business in the district had been equipped with gas lights. Spring Hill secured a telephone exchange which allowed people to have phones in their homes in September 1901. The *Spring Hill New Era* office, which relocated to the nominated district in 1912, was given the phone number "1." In November 1911, a bond issue for a municipal electric light plant was passed and by the end of the year the electric company replaced the gas street lights on Main with "50 60 watt series Tungsten lamps." By the time twenty-four hour electric service was established in 1915, all businesses in the district were wired for electricity. Steam heated stores on Main were the next necessary improvement in 1916. After years of treating the surface of Main Street with oil covered with gravel, Main was finally paved in 1929 due in large measure to agitation from downtown merchants.

The buildings identified within the two architectural styles represent the three major building booms in the Spring Hill Downtown Historic District's period of significance between 1886 and 1928. The properties listed as key contributing maintain their overall integrity, making the nominated district a distinctive and rare representation of a turn of the century "one-part commercial block" anchored with "two-part" commercial buildings.

Inventory: Spring Hill Downtown Historic District

The inventory forms two parallel lines running north and south. Starting at the west corner of Main and Nichols Streets, the inventory proceeds one block south along the west side of Main to the corner of Main and Hale Streets. Then starting again at the east corner of Main and Nichols Streets the inventory proceeds one block south along the east side of Main to the corner of Main and Hale Streets. The buildings are listed by street address, construction date, historic name, legal description, and owner name.

1. 103 S. Main, Spring Hill Oil Company, Sprague's Addition. Lots 1-3, Block 5, Excluded.

One-story contemporary stucco commercial garage.

Owner: Ron Stiles, Spring Hill Oil Company
103 S. Main
P.O. Box 479
Spring Hill, KS 66083

2. 107 S. Main, 1896, Rudy Building; Sprague's Addition. E 118' Lot 4, Block 5 Ex N 5', Key Contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous building to the south. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass (extant). Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large vertical multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flank the centered entry door and two side lights inside the portico. Above the door is a transom window with mullion in the middle. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Charles Smith
31550 W. 303rd
P.O. Box 202
Paola, KS 66071

3. 109 S. Main, 1896, Flanders Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 5, Block 5 Ex S 2', Key Contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous buildings to the north and south. The building burnt again in January 1901 and was

rebuilt by local contractors. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, was comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass which has been compromised due to its replacement with plywood. Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large vertical multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns, flank the centered, paired entry doors and two side lights inside the portico. Above the door was a transom window (nonextant). A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. Later the wooden awning was replaced by a canvass one (nonextant). The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Robert Stinson
115 Nelson Circle
Olathe, KS 66061

4. 111 S. Main, 1896, Null Restaurant Building, Sprague's Addition. S 2' Lot 5 & Lot 6 Ex S 3' x E 60' Block 5, Non-contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous buildings to the north and south. The building burnt again in January 1901 and was rebuilt by local contractors. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, probably closely resembled the configuration found on the other west side buildings constructed at the same time although slightly higher. However, its architectural integrity has been compromised due to the use of a irreversible brick false front which nearly completely covers the area of the original plate glass windows, surrounds, and entry door. The upper façade, with its patterned brickwork, has also been covered with a corrugated steel false front.

Owner: Grant and Eleanor Merritt
Bay Area Piggyback
P.O. Box 87
Spring Hill, KS 66083

5. 113 S. Main, 1896, Wiley Building, Sprague's Addition. S 3' x E 60' Lot 6 & N 11' Lot 7, Block 5, and 115 S. Main, 1896, Wiley Building, Sprague's Addition. S 14' Lot 7, Block 5, Key Contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous buildings to the north and south. It has apparently always been partitioned in the middle and occupied by two separate businesses, the north of which has always been a barber shop. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, was comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass which has been compromised due to its replacement with wood siding. Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large vertical multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flanked the centered, paired entry doors and two side lights inside the portico (nonextant). Above the door was a transom window (nonextant) which has been replaced by an exhaust fan over the north door and wood siding over the south.

A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Grant and Eleanor Merritt
Bay Area Piggyback
P.O. Box 87
Spring Hill, KS 66083

6. 117 S. Main, 1896, Newton Building, Sprague's Addition. E 103' Lot 8, Block 5, Key Contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous buildings to the north and south. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, was comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass (nonextant). Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (now covered). Two large vertical multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flanked the centered entry door and two side lights inside the portico (nonextant). Above the door was a transom window with mullion in the middle (nonextant). A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The wall area above the windows and portico are decorated with an embrasure patterned brickwork cornice. The architectural integrity of the Newton building has been compromised due to the use of a reversible wood frame construction false front to enclose the features of the original plate glass windows, surrounds, and entry door. Likewise, the upper façade, with its patterned brickwork has been stuccoed and a reversible framed overhang with wood shingles now separates the new plate glass windows from the upper facade.

Owner: Grant and Eleanor Merritt
Bay Area Piggyback
P.O. Box 87
Spring Hill, KS 66083

7. 119 S. Main, 1896, Sowers Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 9, Block 5, Non-contributing. Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building shares a partnership wall with the contiguous buildings to the north and south. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, probably closely resembled the configuration found on the other west side buildings constructed at the same. However, its architectural integrity has been compromised due to the use of an irreversible brick false front to completely cover the areas of the original plate glass windows, surrounds, and entry door. A new doorway is no longer centered and two new windows have been added. The frieze, with its brick corbelling, remains intact.

Owner: Jeff Sears
P.O. Box 283
Spring Hill, KS 66083

8. 121 S. Main, 1896, McCanse Building, Sprague's Addition. 16 x 55.2' NE Cor Lot 10, Block 5, Key Contributing.

Built in the summer of 1896 with the rest of the west side by local contractors, the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building initially shared a partnership wall with only the Sowers building to the north because, until the "two-part" bank and Masonic building was completed adjacent to it on the south in 1903, it was the last building in the row. The façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, is comprised largely of an arrangement of plate glass windows (extant) and single entry door. Unlike any other building on the west side, the recessed entry portico was not placed symmetrically in the middle of the lower façade, flanked by plate glass windows. Instead the builders placed the portico in the northern most part of the façade with the single entry door flush against the Sowers building. Using only one cast iron engaged column on the left side of the door way, and the accompanying cast iron riser, they completed the frame of a recessed portico (extant) to the north of the plate glass window formation. One large display window, with muntins and ornamental wooden surrounds, on the south side of the engaged column join with one side light inside the portico (extant). Above the door is a transom window (extant). A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Charles Smith
31550 W. 303rd
P.O. Box 202
Paola, KS 66071

9. 123 S. Main, 1903; Spring Hill Banking Company and Masonic Building, Sprague's Addition. E 103' Lot 10 Ex E 55.5' N 16' & E 103' Lot 11 Ex S 4', Block 5, Key Contributing.

Completed in early 1904 by local contractors, the two story, brick "two-part" commercial building is typical of bank and fraternal hall architecture in the Victorian era. Unlike many "two-parts" of the late nineteenth century which are often characterized by a horizontal division between the street level zone for public space and the upper zone for more private spaces, the two stories of the bank building harmonize with its overall commercial purpose. The building's façades, on the east elevation facing Main Street (adjacent to the McCanse building) and south elevation facing Hale Street, are comprised of brick construction. The cornice of this Italianate building is created by corbelling the dentil course and using a panelled architrave. The symmetrically placed windows on both the first and second floor and the entry doorway are embellished with decorative brick relieving arches and surrounds with Victorian details (extant).

Owner: Ray Goffinet (downstairs)
CMI Lumber
12400 Olive
Kansas City, MO 64146

Grant and Eleanor Merritt (upstairs)
Bay Area Piggyback
P.O. Box 87
Spring Hill, KS 66083

10. 102 S. Main, 1886, Hogue Building, Sprague's Addition. Lots 12 & 13, Block 2, Key Contributing.

Built by local contractors in 1886, the two-story, brick "two-part" commercial building, which has always housed a hardware store, is an exaggerated two story and, typical of the commercial design in the late Victorian era of the early 1900s, is characterized by a harmonization of treatment between stories and restraint in ornamentation. The practical façade, on the west elevation facing Main Street, is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass in the lower portion and plain brick upper façade with minimal decoration. The builders placed two cast iron engaged columns, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, on either side of the door way and an accompanying cast iron riser, along the length of the western façade (extant). Two large rectangular multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, in-between the engaged columns, flank the centered, entry doors and two side lights inside a small entry portico. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The exaggerated wall area above the windows and portico consists of a large brick area, interrupted by three vertical windows which are embellished with brick relieving arches and surrounds. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Joseph Campbell
P.O. Box 427
Spring Hill, KS 66083

11. 104 S. Main, c. 1887, Spring Hill Banking Company Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 13, Block 2, Key Contributing.

Built by local contractors in ca. 1887 and remodeled in 1912, the façade of this single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building, on the west elevation facing Main Street, is comprised largely of an arrangement of plate glass windows (extant) and single entry door. One large display window, with muntins and ornamental wooden surrounds dominates the lower facade. Above the adjacent door is a transom window (extant). A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The wall area above the windows and door consist of a horizontal tie plate with four pair of ornamental anchors and simple brick construction. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Dick and Kathy Allenbrand
601 S. Race
Spring Hill, KS 66083

12. 106 S. Main, 1888, Riffle Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 14, Block 2, Key Contributing. Built together by local contractors, 106 and 108 S. Main originally looked the same and since the post office occupied the north one, the two Riffle buildings were referred to as the "Post Office Block" when completed in October 1888. The façade of the northern portion of this single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building, on the west elevation facing Main Street, is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass (extant). Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds and brick at the base, on

either side of the engaged columns flank the centered entry door and two side lights inside the portico. Above the door is a transom window. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Vondie and Aureta O'Connor
P.O. Box 472
Spring Hill, KS 66083

13. 108 S. Main, 1888, Riffle Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 15 & N 1' Lot 16, Block 2, Key *non-Contributing. See E-Mail in Correspondence file*

Built together by local contractors, 106 and 108 S. Main originally looked the same and since the Post Office occupied the north one, the two Riffle buildings were referred to as the "Post Office Block" in October 1888. The façade of the southern portion of this single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building, on the west elevation facing Main Street, is comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass (extant). Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flank the centered double entry door inside the portico. Above the doors are a wooden louver. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: J.D. Berry
104 W. Prairie St. #1
Olathe, KS 66061

14. 110 S. Main, 1905, Pratt Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 16 Ex N 1', Block 2, Non-contributing.

Rebuilt in 1905 by local contractors, the façade of the single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial building, on the west elevation facing Main Street, was comprised largely of a symmetrical arrangement of glass (nonextant). The architectural integrity of the building has now been compromised due to deterioration and the replacement of all the façade glass with plywood. Two cast iron engaged columns on either side of the door way with an accompanying cast iron riser, from the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works, complete the frame of a centered recessed portico (extant). Two large multiple pane display windows, with ornamental wooden surrounds, on either side of the engaged columns flank the centered double entry door inside the portico. Above the doors were a transom window with mullion. A large wooden framed, "cattle shed" awning with metal roof (nonextant), designed to cover the plate glass windows in case of fire, ran the length of the façade. The frieze employs brick corbelling.

Owner: Jack Watkins (the estate of)
P.O. Box 563
Spring Hill, KS 66083

15. 112 S. Main, 1905, Rutter Building, Sprague's Addition. Lot 17, Block 2, Non-contributing. The façade, on the west elevation facing Main Street, probably closely resembled the configuration found on the other brick "one-parts" although slightly higher. However, its

architectural integrity has been compromised due to the use of a brick false front which nearly completely covers the area of the original plate glass windows, surrounds, and entry door. The upper façade, with its patterned brickwork, has also been covered with a reversible false front constructed of composition shingles and a wooden stoop covered with composition shingles.

Owner: Jack Watkins (the estate of)
P.O. Box 563
Spring Hill, KS 66083

16. 116 S. Main, 1905, Sowers Building, Sprague's Addition. All of Lot 18 Ex N 6' & N 10' Lot 19, Block 2, Non-contributing.

The façade, on the west elevation facing Main Street, probably closely resembled the configuration found on the other brick "one-parts" although slightly higher. However, its architectural integrity has been compromised due to the use of a brick false front which nearly completely covers the area of the original plate glass windows, surrounds, and entry door. The upper façade, with its patterned brickwork, has also been covered with a reversible false front constructed of composition shingles and a wooden stoop covered with composition shingles.

Owner: Cole-Smith Post No. 350
116 S. Main
P.O. Box 427
Spring Hill, KS 66083

17. 118 S. Main, 1934, IOOF Hall, Sprague's Addition. S 15' Lot 19 & All Lots 20 & 21, Block 2, Non-contributing.

Rebuilt after a fire destroyed the "two-part" hall of the Priscilla Lodge #70 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) in 1934, this brick "two-part" is an exaggerated two story with corbelled frieze.

Owner: Bruce Funeral Home
Attn: Shirley
106 S. Center St.
Gardner, KS 66030

Part 8: Significance

The Spring Hill Downtown Historic District (ca. 1886-1928) is being nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places under criteria A and C for its historical association with the commercial and social development of Spring Hill, as well as for its architectural significance. Platted as Sprague's Addition Block 5 and Block 2 in 1870, this concentration lines both the east and west sides of Main Street, along a one block area between what is now Nichols Street to the north and Hale Street to the south. The eleven key contributing brick "one-part" and "two-part" commercial buildings in the nominated district, all of which exhibit a moderate to high degree of architectural integrity and significance, were constructed in three distinct building periods: 1886-1888, 1896, and 1903-1905. For the purposes of this nomination, the district's period of significance has been identified as beginning in 1886, when the first building boom commenced, and concluding in 1928, when the district's largest business closed. During these years, the

properties which comprise the nominated district were the commercial and social heart of Spring Hill and the surrounding rural areas.

Johnson County was one of the first counties settled in Kansas, and most of the surviving resources are associated with the periods of Kansas history identified as "Rural/Agricultural Dominance" (1865-1900) and "Progress, Prosperity, and the Great Depression" (1900-1940). For most of these years, Olathe was the largest and most important town in the county. Yet, as the railroads began linking the rural agricultural regions of Johnson County to Kansas City and national markets in the 1870s, a number of smaller communities along the rail lines developed as minor shipping points for livestock and farm produce.

Within an increasingly integrated urban and rural economy, competition among these small towns was fierce. Therefore, the historical significance of the Spring Hill business district lies first in its place within the context of the state's period of railroad construction and town building between the 1880s and early 20th century. Moreover, the development of Spring Hill's "New Town" business district speaks directly to the role of railroads in the competitive commercial construction and development of small Kansas towns in this period. Additionally, as the commercial and public heart of a small rural town struggling to adapt to the impact of technology and market forces reconfiguring the agricultural ideal, while at the same time distinguishing itself from area rivals, the story of the nominated district between 1886 and 1928 is characteristic of the unwavering economic optimism, faith in progress, and civic "boosterism" found in America during this era. Lastly, sometimes the particularities of larger national trends and tensions can best be examined in the relatively fixed environment of the local community. In this way, as the nation as a whole struggled to reconcile its self-image in the face of radical change brought on by industrialization, urbanization, and an economic revolution, Spring Hill's downtown district is also historically significant for the insight it affords into the larger dynamics and tensions between urban versus rural, industrial versus agrarian, and tradition versus modernity.

Spring Hill was platted and surveyed as a town site in May 1857 by James B. Hovey on the high ground southeast of the Santa Fe Trail and southwest of the Boonville Trail. Named for another small town near Mobile, Alabama -- because of the former's charm, beautiful groves, and flower gardens -- Spring Hill's first business district centered around a town square along the stage route. Hovey's initial focus was to attract a "good class of settlers" to the surrounding area before efforts at town building could begin in earnest. Therefore town development was initially very slow. (A History, 19) "The Old Hotel," as it is called locally, was the first permanent building in Spring Hill and was something of a landmark in the area. Built by Hovey on the highest elevation around, the structure served as a stop on the stage line which carried travelers south from Olathe to Fort Scott. This initially put the tiny settlement "on the map" (the journalist Horace Greeley, who coined the phrase "Go West, Young Man, Go West" stopped there in 1859), providing the impetus for the construction of a grocery store, post office, stage barn, town square with planted trees, cabins, a cemetery, church, and school.

Most in the area were farmers, who drove their livestock from the open range to market in Kansas City, and the town itself had few residents in the antebellum years. Yet after surviving the bloody struggle over free or slave state status, several border raids by Missouri ruffians, and a

serious drought, Spring Hill benefited in the post-Civil War years from an influx of settlers from Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana. By 1870, larger and more permanent homes were built. Around the public square the growing little community supported a hardware store, blacksmith shop, new school, Methodist Episcopal Church, Presbyterian church, tailor, dressmaker, three general merchandise stores, and a Masonic Lodge.

The Railroad

During the initial surge of railroad development in the state during the late 1860s and early 1870s, Kansans increasingly resented the economic power of the railroads and their disproportionate influence on local agricultural and business ventures. Indeed, as "the iron horse" made proximity to geographic features considerably less decisive in determining the placement and success of a town, one reality of the industrial revolution was that often developing towns thrived along rail lines while others were discarded when the railroad bypassed them. Simply put, in the 1870s, a station on the railroad was critical to Spring Hill's future. But Spring Hill was elevated approximately seventy feet above farmlands to the east, and securing a railroad line was contingent on excavation through rock to place the tracks on grade with land to the east.

Like many small Johnson County communities, Spring Hill was expected to pay the Missouri River, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad \$15,000 to cover these construction costs and establish a station there. After Spring Hill refused to do so, the railroad, which began in Kansas City in 1866, "punished" the town in 1870 by running its track one half mile east of Spring Hill and establishing a depot two miles away in Ocheltree, a major economic competitor. With no trains stopping in Spring Hill, citizens traveled to Ocheltree to get their mail, ship livestock and produce, and ride. In response to this inconvenience and economic hardship, a Spring Hill entrepreneur A.D. Richardson, who owned property just to the east of town on more level ground and who had connections with the railroad, secured a spur from the railroad and a depot all at a cost of only \$1,500 to the people of Spring Hill. "After many endeavors to induce the company to make a station of this place," a local newspaper at the time reported, "a subscription list went the rounds of the place for raising funds to make a switch by which means the switch was constructed. The depot was built by independent enterprise, viz: Geo. Sprague, B. Sprague, and R.T. Thorn, being the first house built at the station, completed the first of April 1870." The town of Spring Hill then moved east from its original site, referred to thereafter as "Old Town," toward the railroad. The business district of this "New Town" near the railroad centered on Main Street and it became of the hub of the town's commercial and residential development between 1886, when the first brick commercial building was complete, and 1928 when the town's chief retailer closed.

Like many emerging towns in the late 19th and early 20th century, the railroad was the life blood of Spring Hill and the primary draw for bringing citizens to Main Street. As the railroad eventually became the Kansas City, Fort Scott, & Gulf, and later the St. Louis and San Francisco, upwards of twelve passenger trains and countless freights a day went through Spring Hill. So much rail traffic passed through that a second track was added around 1920. Aside from the farmers and ranchers who regularly came to town to ship on the railroad, the arrival of the mail train with letters and newspapers always caused activity in New Town. Likewise, people

routinely turned out to watch passenger trains go by or catch the 4:00pm train to Kansas City, which returned at midnight. Much to the chagrin of local merchants on Main, traveling salesmen, or "drummers," frequently stopped in Spring Hill to entice citizens with their wares. In the summer, produce like watermelons sometimes accidentally "fell" off the trains and was retrieved by appreciative citizens, as did much needed coal in the winter. Spring Hill's only brushes with greatness came via the railroad. In 1900 Vice Presidential candidate Teddy Roosevelt spoke from the rear platform of a train when he passed through and that same year William Jennings Bryan shook hands from back of his train.

Boosterism

As the town grew in the years between the 1880s and 1920s various civic-minded citizens, merchants, city fathers, and the local newspaper consistently admonished residents to improve the quality of life in Spring Hill, distinguish themselves from neighboring competitors, and strive to be a progressive, or "up-to-date" town. This "boosterism" took many forms, but cumulatively it illustrates the commitment, and often grim determination, of rural Kansans who wanted to see their small town survive over the long haul and flourish in the face of rapidly changing social and economic times. Leading this charge was the self-appointed official booster of the town, the *Spring Hill New Era* newspaper. Over the years the *New Era* exuded business optimism with its praise of "wide-awake" Main street merchants and condemnation of "knockers" who always found fault with the town. Brief editorials often cajoled, flattered, and when necessary shamed readers into doing their part to "boom the town."

As early as 1883 the *New Era* encouraged residents to not only clean their property, plant trees, and improve the town, but also ambitiously ventured that, "What we need is a new city hall, a first class dentist, a new opera house, another good hotel, another furniture store, about a dozen more business houses, and about 50 dwelling houses." (A History, 7) This agenda setting power of the local paper manifested itself numerous times over the years as the *New Era* organized support for a variety of civic improvements. With the first depot considered an eyesore and the cause of considerable embarrassment to Spring Hill, one of the paper's first crusades in the early 1880s was the construction of a suitable depot to match the town's growing prosperity. This new depot was eventually completed in January 1884, with the same basic plan as one in Springfield, Missouri, which delighted civic enthusiasts. On Main, dilapidated and outdated sidewalks were considered an impediment to business so throughout 1884 the *New Era* agitated for the city to put down new wooden sidewalks along Main. When a new eight foot wide sidewalk was completed on the east side of Main in July 1884, the *New Era* responded with the observation that it "improves the appearance of property 50 percent; now let's have some on the other side down to the post office."

When the issue of building a new school building came up in 1889, the *New Era* ventured that, "with its metropolitan airs and modern improvements" only a brick building was befitting of the town's status. "Wooden school buildings will do for Edgerton and small-fry Jimcrow towns that have no bright future," the paper explained, "but not for the second city in the county. Spring Hill has outgrown the wooden age and is now in the brick and galvanized iron age." A new brick

school was constructed between 1893 and 1894 and included the first separate high school whose first graduating class was in 1896.

The 1886 to 1888 Building Period

Reflecting this commitment to the dawning of "the brick and galvanized iron age" in Spring Hill, the first major building period in the nominated district took place between 1886-1888. During this three year period the Hogue, Spring Hill Banking Company, and Riffle buildings were constructed on the east side of Main Street. The completion of the "two-part" Hogue building at 102 S. Main in 1886 began this period of construction and it remains the oldest extant building in the district. The "two-part" commercial building was the most common form of commercial architecture for small to medium sized buildings in the United States and as was the case in Spring Hill it was often the dominant feature of small cities and towns. Over the next two years, the three contiguous "one-part" commercial buildings were completed to the south of the Hogue building.

In a brief retrospective chronicling the history of Main Street, the *Spring Hill New Era* in 1896 reported that "following the destructive fire here in 1886, Mr. Hogue erected a substantial two-story brick building which his large stock occupies." Samuel R. Hogue was a pillar of the Spring Hill community, not only as a respected Main Street businessman who operated in this location for twenty-one years, but also as an active Civil War veteran in the Grand Army of the Republic, mayor, and city councilman at various times. In 1883 his full advertisement in the *New Era* read, "S.R Hogue Dealer in Hardware and Implements, Guns, Revolvers, Cutlery, Nails, and Window Glass: A Full Supply of Cooking and Heating Stoves Always in Stock - Glidden Steel Barb Wire and Bain Wagons a Specialty." Over the years, Hogue was the town's leading hardware dealer and after the construction of his brick "two-part," his store became a popular place for area farmers to congregate during their trips to Main Street. In 1903 Hogue put in a brick sidewalk in front of the store to accommodate the pedestrian traffic outside, and according to local sources kept a "big iron kettle" out front to accommodate local dogs before the days of fire hydrants (Elizabeth Barnes, "Historic Johnson County" *The Journal-Herald*, 1953).

In 1904 Hogue retired and traded his business to Harvey V. Divelbliss for money and a 250 acre farm southeast of town. Divelbliss, along with his partner T.E.S. Wilson, carried on the hardware business with shelf and heavy hardware, stoves, ranges, gasoline stoves, builder's hardware, and implements. In 1905 T.E.S. Wilson left the partnership to open a grocery in one of the new brick "one-parts" just built on the east, but died suddenly at the age of thirty-seven. The next year Divelbliss traded the hardware store to E.S. Miller for a farm. The Miller Hardware Company became the Roberts & Lee Hardware Store in the fall of 1906 and according to their advertisement still carried "A Full Line of Hardware, Buggies, Wagons, Implements, Stoves, Graniteware, Lisk Copper Ware, Nickel Plated Ware, Pitkins and Bradley & Vrooman Paints, Window Glass, Glazier's Supplies, [and] Case Bros. Cutlery." After a brief stint as just A.S. Roberts Hardware in 1907, the business became the S.D. Beats Hardware Company in 1908. Later that year, O.W. Rhinehart, who had been a clerk for Hogue as a younger man, traded a farm for a half interest with Beats and the business became Rhinehart and Beets Hardware. Between 1908 and 1912 frequent name changes accompanied change in ownership with Rhinehart and

Beets becoming Rhinehart and Williams, then Hoover & Ellis Hardware, and just Ellis Hardware. In 1916, then owner George Ellis, an automobile enthusiast, installed an underground gasoline tank with an "automatic dispensing arrangement" and electric sign for automobile owners to use. This may have been the first gas station on Main.

During the First World War, George Ellis sold the hardware store to E.Y. Gay of Gardner, Kansas in exchange for a farm in Anderson, Missouri. For the remainder of the 1910s and 1920s, The E.Y. Gay Hardware Company remained the headquarters "For Your Builder's Hardware, Implements, Vehicles, Stoves, Pumps, Paints, Etc.," and also the local "Agency for Chevrolet Motor Cars: Tires, Tubes and Supplies." During March 1918, Gay advertised the "National Implement Inspection and Repair Week," a drive to make sure all farm implements were in perfect working order so there would not be any delays in farming that spring which might impede the war effort. Carrying on Ellis' automobile initiative, Gay Hardware re-tired automobiles, and after a brief time as the local agent for Dodge cars, by 1921 carried a line of Ford parts and did repairs on Ford cars. It was during the 1920s that the riser and sidewalk in front of Gays became the place on Main to listen to the "play by play" of baseball games on the wireless during the summer. In 1926 the façade was remodeled with larger plate glass windows in front replacing the smaller ones and "enclosed [windows] on the inside to better display the merchandise."

The first of the "one-parts" completed during the 1886-1888 building period was the Spring Hill Banking Company building adjacent to the Hogue building on the south at 104 S. Main. The only building in the nominated district for which an exact date of construction could not be established, it is reasonable to assume that the Spring Hill Banking Company Building was built circa 1887. In the 1874 Johnson County Atlas there is a small building on the southern portion of Lot 13 and when Jerry McCanse bought that part of Lot 13 for \$150 in 1880, the price would seem to indicate there still was an inexpensive frame building there. In February 1887, within a year of the construction of his own brick "two-part," Hogue sold the seven feet of the north side of Lot 13 he owned to McCanse for \$43.00. When McCanse sold the whole Lot 13 three years later in December 1890, he received \$1,200, indicating that a brick "one-part" had probably been constructed. It is reasonable to place the construction date at 1887, the year McCanse acquired the seven feet for building purposes.

In April 1889 R.W. Elstun & Co., the first bank on Main Street, reorganized into the Spring Hill Banking Company at this location. Established by W.P. Holmes as a "home co-operative institution for the purpose of doing a general banking business," the bank initially consisted of 30 stockholders who owned 100 shares at \$500, with a total capital stock of \$50,000. The nine original directors were W.P. Holmes, Caleb Dwyer, Eli Davis, H.A. Mathews, Briscoe Robinson, S.R. Hogue, Gilbert Bunnell, William Riffle, and J.S. Mackey. "Based largely on the rich soil of our community, owned by farmer stockholders" and "businessmen from Spring Hill and Kansas City," the Spring Hill Banking Company remained strong during the financial fluctuations of the late nineteenth century. After the bank moved to the new location across the street in 1903, John W. Lambert bought the building and apparently stored supplies and equipment for his plumbing shop there from 1903 to 1909, during which time cement sidewalks were put down on both sides of Main. In 1909 the short-lived Uncle Sam Realty Company,

began by W.E. Tisdale and west side barber Frank Chase, occupied the building. In 1910 it was replaced by The Owl Restaurant owned by W.F. Graves. By 1911 S.I. Wikoff had leased "the old bank building from J.W. Lambert" to open a his new pool hall (giving Spring Hill two of them).

After these brief interludes the building once again became a bank in 1912. Chartered that year, the Farmer's State Bank of Spring Hill opened with a capital stock of \$20,000 and Irwin Williams as the cashier. As part of the opening in 1912, the *New Era* reported that "the Farmer's State Bank is remodeling and improving the front of the bank building. The old front has been removed and a handsome new plate glass front put in, which adds greatly to the appearance of the building. The entrance door has been moved to the south side, which vastly increases the convenience and size of the lobby. The old cattle shed awning has been town down and a new canvass awning will be put up instead which will be another big improvement." During the 1910s, the building was wall papered, carpeted, "a new steel ceiling" was installed, and a gold leaf sign was painted on the front window.

Although the bank adopted the slogan "Safety, Secrecy and Service" during the war years, in 1921 one of the town's largest scandals led to its failure. That year "irregularities in the accounts" and "impairment of capital" caused the bank to close; "a staggering financial blow" for the town, the *New Era* reported. At first it was believed that the personal bankruptcy of unscrupulous businessman Charles Pettyjohn caused the difficulties. But after further examination it was discovered that Irwin Williams, the cashier, had embezzled bonds and securities worth an estimated \$100,000. Williams was charged with "forgery, making false statements to the Bank Commissioner, falsifying the records of the bank, receiving deposits when he knew the bank was in failing condition, appropriating Liberty bonds left in the care of the bank, and the embezzlement of various amounts." Although deposits were guaranteed by the State Guarantee Fund, the bank was finished. So was Williams, he was sentenced to five to twenty-five years in the prison at Lansing, Kansas. In the 1920s the building was occupied by The Harding Cream Company and later in 1925 J.E. Wikoff moved his "Jim's Place" restaurant into what thereafter was known as the Farmer's Bank building.

The last two buildings completed during the 1886-1888 building period were the Riffle buildings at 106 and 108 S. Main. In the summer of 1888 the *New Era* wrote that "Wm. Riffle received the iron columns and other parts for the front of his new rooms. The brick will be on the ground soon." Riffle purchased Lots 14 and 15 in July 1888, just prior to when the *New Era* first reported about the construction of "his new rooms." Built together, 106 and 108 S. Main originally looked the same and since the post office occupied the north one, the two Riffle buildings were referred to as the "Post Office Block" when completed in October 1888.

From 1888 to 1897, the Spring Hill post office occupied the north Riffle building, but between 1897 and 1908 there is little in the historical record to determine its subsequent occupant(s). During these years, A.B. Vanderveer, a contractor and builder, kept a shop on the east side of Main. It is possible that since all the other buildings on the east side at the time seem to be retail oriented, and because another craftsman, the plumber John Lambert, bought the building in 1905, the north Riffle building could have housed Vanderveer's shop during these years. It is also very probable that when Charles Graham moved his Parlor Meat Market to the

Riffle building in 1908, it was this north one. Advertising "Baltimore select oysters, hog's brains, spare ribs, cooked boneless pig's feet, bologna, lunch ham, weinerwurst, pork chops, pork steak, fresh side meat, [and] home rendered leaf lard" Graham also began delivering meat at no charge to area farmers in 1910. O.C. Shepard drove the meat wagon and also collected eggs and butter from the farmers.

After Graham closed the Parlor Meat Market and went on the road as a traveling salesman for a packing house firm in 1911, Jim Lambert used his building as storage space for his plumbing equipment and supplies. In 1913 the building was briefly Theno's Bakery; serving "fresh bread baked daily, also all kinds of pastries, cookies, fancy cakes and pies." J.W. Janes then moved his music store to what was by then known as the Lambert building in 1914. After Janes' departure, the building took on its most memorable function, that of a moving picture theater.

S.I. Wikoff first leased the Lambert building in the summer of 1915 and opened the O.K. Theater for "movie picture shows." Wikoff purchased a "6A machine which is one of the highest priced and best machines made," the *New Era* reported. He also installed a "Gold Fibre screen" and a Steiner & Son piano which Ethel Wilson played. Movies were shown at 8:30pm every Tuesday and Saturday and twice on Thursday and Friday for five and ten cents. Wikoff sometimes gave a dance for everyone after the show on weekends. Children under sixteen were not admitted to either. The O.K. Theater's first week's fare included "Shadow of Death," "Wanted-A Nurse," "Mr. Jarr and the Lady Reformer," and the comedy "The Maiden of Romance." After very large crowds turned out for the thirteen part serial "Adventures of Kathlyn," the first major film shown in Spring Hill, the *New Era* concluded that "people of the town and country appreciate the movie show house."

Wikoff never made money on the theater and even after "Perils of Pauline" ran in March 1915, he closed the following year. During World War I, Roy Payne remodeled the building and re-opened as The Palace Theater. The remodeling including the addition of a "motograph" machine to project the pictures, new folding chairs fastened securely to the floor, a projection booth built outside on the east side of the building, and seats facing the front of the building on Main. The Palace offered three shows a week on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday nights. Tuesday night was a serial and two reel comedy, Thursday nights were five reel features, and Saturday was a three reel feature and a two reel comedy.

Initially contracted to Paramount Pictures, The Palace Theater opened with Dustin Farnum in "The Virginian," Marguerite Clark in "Snow White," and Mary Pickford in "Rags." The first major hit to play at the Palace was Charlie Chaplin's "A Dog's Life," for which the theater advertised, "If you think you cannot stand a laugh every 3 seconds for 90 minutes, we suggest that you miss this program." As the theater became more popular (filling to a capacity of 212 on the weekends) and admission rose to fifteen and twenty-five cents, Payne made several more improvements to the building. He first changed "the front and arrang[ed] for a lobby with two side door entrances," installed a forty inch electric suction fan which changed the air in the building every two minutes, and painted the exterior "buff and trimmed in brown." Later in 1920, to give the theater a "playhouse" appearance, opera seats were installed in the back (folding chairs were still used on the front rows for children), a ticket window was put in, a mahogany piano and

a large Edison machine were added, and the walls were painted "a chocolate brown five feet up from the floor and then on up finished in buff, as is the ceiling." According to the *New Era's* description at the time, "on the walls at regular intervals are hung several enlarged pictures of popular movies stars, which add greatly to the artistic effect and beauty of the interior." Eventually a stage was built to accommodate vaudeville acts and the exterior was painted white.

During the 1920s, the theater changed hands several times, even closing briefly in 1924. Payne sold to T.A. McEwen of Kansas City, who in turn sold to Charles Wright, who then sold to H.R. Van Pelt of Paola. During Van Pelt's brief ownership a silver screen was added and Saturday matinees were begun in the fall of 1925. In 1926, the theater was again sold, this time to Will and his son Lawrence Cantrell, who ran it during the depression.

Upon its completion in October 1888, the south Riffle building was occupied by the George Hines Grocery Store which was replaced by G.A. Simpson's Grocery in 1893. After this, there is little evidence in the historical record to determine the building's occupant other than a reference to Eli Davis & Son having used it as a "ware room" for their furniture business prior to them purchasing the building from Riffle in March, 1911. After that, the *New Era* reported A.C. Back moved his harness shop "to the east side of Main street and in to the old Riffle building, recently purchased by E. Davis & Son." Before moving his business once again to the west side of Main, Back installed a Champion combination harness and shoe machine with an electric motor. In October, 1921, the Timmons brothers bought the building from Davis for \$2,750. They had acquired The Spring Hill Creamery Company at another location the year prior and upon purchasing this new building re-opened their business as the Timmons Creamery Company. Besides their cream, eggs, and ice business they kept a full line of poultry and dairy supplies, staying open until 10:00pm on the nights of the movies. The building was apparently partitioned because in 1927 J.W. Timmons moved his City Grocery & Meat Market from the Hines building on the west side to the north room of the building owned by his brothers.

However, in November 1927 Jim Russell and Frank Land bought the combined Timmons Brothers Grocery, Meat Market, and Creamery, plus the building for \$5,400. They actually purchased it from H.A. Lee & Co., who had earlier bought it from the Timmons brothers by trading them a 240 acre farm near Nevada, Missouri. The business operated briefly as Russell & Land Groceries until Frank Land bought out Russell in 1928 and renamed it simply The Land Grocery.

Although no longer at this location, 103 S. Main was the site of the Spring Hill Grange # 279 Co-Operative Store between 1891 and 1932. Its construction in 1891 and accompanying widening of Main Street by ten feet, nominally within this first building period, helped kick off the nominated district's period of significance and it was regarded by many as the "cornerstone" of Main's commercial and social activity throughout its forty year existence. The largest store in Spring Hill's history, the "two-part" brick commercial block's façade, on the east elevation facing Main street, incorporated stone and brick decorative patterns of various shapes and size, common in the Victorian era. Inside, it housed a durable and dry goods store on the bottom floor with a large meeting hall and offices, including the town's various doctors and dentists, on the second floor. Over the years its large hall was used for community meetings, dances, vaudeville shows,

silent movies, and a gymnasium before the high school had one. Just before it closed in July 1928, the *New Era* sadly recalled that for "more than half a century, [it had been] the biggest and leading mercantile establishment of Spring Hill, and one of the few remaining co-operative, or Grange stores in Kansas." For the purposes of this nomination, its closure marks the end of the Spring Hill Downtown Historic District's period of significance. In 1932 the building was sold to satisfy a judgement and torn down.

The 1896 Building Period

The 1890s were a boom time for Spring Hill and the *New Era* rallied the troops and led the cheers. Rebutting the common misconception that Spring Hill was of comparable size to Gardner and Edgerton, two local rivals, the *New Era* proclaimed that, "Spring Hill and Olathe are the leading cities in the county," citing 1895 census data which showed that the population of Gardner and Edgerton combined was only slightly larger than Spring Hill's 619 citizens. In 1898 the city dug a gas well and pipeline which provided gas for heating and lighting across town, prompting the *New Era* to prophesy that Spring Hill "will soon be the hottest little town in eastern Kansas with a boom that will be second only to Iola." Coupled with seven brick businesses completed on the west side of Main in 1896 and the modern benefits of natural gas, on the eve of the twentieth century, the *New Era* apparently was ready to concede nothing, not even to the much larger Olathe, boasting that, "Spring Hill does more business in proportion to population than any other city in Johnson County."

In 1896 a fire destroyed seven frame buildings south of the Grange (at the corner of Nichols and Main) along the west side of Main. The large metal, "cattle shed" awnings on the east side were lowered for the first time and were credited by many as the main reason the fire did not spread to the east side. Yet, the fire afforded the opportunity city boosters had been waiting for to build permanent brick "one-part" commercial buildings all connected with a seamless façade. Each of the lots sold for \$250.00 apiece and by April 1896, the *New Era* reported that, "Every lot in the burned district is now in the hands of a builder, and all the new brick buildings will go up together as one solid block." "The west side of Main St. is going to outshine the east side in many ways – so the builders say," the paper continued, "all are going to use pressed brick fronts with plate glass, fancy folding awnings and concrete sidewalks." Initially, there was a debate about the size of the new structures. On one hand there was concern that "if all the new buildings on the west side of Main street are but one story they will look monotonous," but on the other, since the west side was naturally elevated higher than the east, two story buildings would put the east side "in the shade." Owners on the west eventually agreed that the block should be at least one story with walls strong enough that a second could be added later. Regardless, the east side, the *New Era* was confident, would surely "feel jealous as it beholds itself in the big plate-glass fronts of the west side." In response, during the spring of 1896 most merchants on the east side did repaint their facades "in order to not be very far behind the west-siders when they get their new rooms completed." Although rain and periodic brick shortages slowed construction, by June 1896 the paper proudly teased that, "the noise of hammers, saws, trowels, mallets and chisels make such a din at times that merchants on the east side complain they cannot hear what their customers call for... A booming town is always a noisy town."

The seven single story, simple box style, brick "one-part" commercial buildings share similar stylistic features and massing as well as many of the same builders. Five of these west side "one-parts" are key contributing, 107, 109, 113 and 115 (same building), 117, and 121 S. Main, while two are non-contributing, 111 and 119 S. Main. Two of these seven "one-parts" built in 1896 burnt again in 1901 and were rebuilt. The facades are generally comprised of plate glass windows on both sides of a small portico supported by cast iron engaged columns, and surmounted by a simple brick cornice. The large wall area between the windows and the patterned brickwork cornice, the building's most distinguishing feature, represent the departure from the one-story "shop" of the 18th and early 19th century and the growth of a new commercial philosophy accompanying industrialization and urbanization in the late 19th century. The large facade fulfilled the basic need to advertise while simultaneously giving the appearance of a larger, more permanent building and a more urban setting. Additionally, these "one-part" commercial buildings reflected a very pragmatic business philosophy grounded in the optimism of entrepreneurs and speculators for the future of Spring Hill's "New Town." For businessmen anticipating their community's continued prosperity and the accompanying increase in real estate value, the "one-part" commercial design met the immediate demand for services in developing small towns and could turn a profit relatively quickly with a comparatively small investment in money and time. Perhaps more significant for the long term, many "one-part" owners believed the nearly seamless row of brick buildings would afford a look of solidarity and permanence to the budding town.

The historical record offers little information regarding the builders, but it appears that John Petty, a Mr. Curtis (both from Paola), and local builder A.B. Vanderveer, described as "the youngest looking and most active veteran of the civil war in this community," were the general contractors. Orville Markley did the stone and brick work and laid the foundations while Tom Brown and George Reeder furnished the stone. The *New Era* reported that the builders purchased the "iron posts and plates used in the fronts of the brick structures" along the west side from Charles Eller of the Fort Scott Foundry-Iron Works. Charles Thomas, from a gravel roofing company in Kansas City, put gravel and asphaltum roofs on all the west side buildings with gravel hauled in on the railroad.

Moving north to south along the west side of Main street, the first of these 1896 commercial structures is the Rudy building at 107 S. Main. The historical record is sparse on the early history of the Rudy building. J.H. Leighty may have run a photography business in the building before 1904. Sometime before 1917 the Landis brothers ran a tinning and plumbing shop in the Rudy building before they moved to the upstairs of Gay Hardware across the street that year. When the Landis brothers moved out, A.C. "Gus" Back, a maker of light and heavy harnesses and shoes, bought the building from the Rudy family and moved his shop there until 1938. That year, George Landis, a plumber and tinner bought the building from Back and moved his business there.

Adjoining the Rudy building to the south is the Flanders building at 109 S. Main. Upon completion in the fall of 1901, George Wheeler's Tonsorial Parlors moved into the Flanders building offering a "First-class Shave or an Artistic Hair Cut." The building was partitioned down the middle with each side having its own entry door and in 1904 J.H. Leighty closed out his

photography business in the Rudy building and opened a jewelry store in the south room of Flanders. In 1905 Clarence Stewart opened the "The Star Meat Market" presumably in the south room as F.P. Pierson's Barber Shop and later Frank Chase's Barber Shop occupied the north. In 1906 Jay Christler opened a music store in the south room of the Flanders building and carried "pianos, organs, sewing machines, stringed instruments, talking machines" in addition to advertising sheet music, supplies and repairs. Frank Chase doubled his shop by taking out the partition and expanding to three chairs in April 1908. Later Chase went into the real estate business and sold the shop to Jack Burn, who along with Roy Brown, operated Burn's Barber Shop from 1910 to 1912.

In January 1912 Charles Flanders, whose father had had the building constructed, sold it to the owner of the *Spring Hill New Era*, William F. Wilkerson. That February the paper reported that, "The New Era has moved its printing plant and office from the old building on Railroad Avenue, where it has been printing for the past 27 years, to its new home in the Flanders building on Main street..." The *New Era*, Johnson County's oldest continuously published newspaper, began as the Republican *Spring Hill Enterprise* in 1870. During the 1870s, the paper changed owners and politics three times until around 1883 when J.W. Sowers and Rolla Leonard acquired the paper and changed its name to the *Spring Hill New Era*. At the turn of the century, the *New Era* was the champion, booster, and voice of Spring Hill commerce and the business interests on Main. In addition to its extensive "Local and Personal News" coverage, the *New Era*, which cost \$1.00 a year for a subscription, featured "all the general news as well as the Prohibition news," plus cartoons such as "The Doings of Dorothy," "Foolish Fred," and "The Hoodoo Coon and the Black Cat." In the local phone system the *New Era* office was given phone number "1."

After having run the paper for seven years under lease from Sowers, the former editor Will Wilkerson bought the paper's printing plant and subscription list from J.W. Sowers in 1911. Wilkerson set about improving the *New Era* by moving it from Railroad Avenue to Main street, installing a folder, and an electric engine to run the presses and other machinery. Although the first sign at the new location mistakenly read "The Spring Hill NEW AREA," the paper settled into a long tenure in the Flanders building. In addition to publishing, the *New Era* office did all the general printing jobs for businessmen on Main, sold fire, lightning, and tornado insurance, and collected the town's "electric light bills" after 1912 (at ten cents a kilowatt). During the 1920s the paper changed hands twice more, first purchased from Wilkerson by Mr. & Mrs. Edgart Martindale and then by Mr. & Mrs. Herman Winkler. In 1938 the *New Era* moved its operations across Main street to the Riffle building and in 1950 it was moved to Gardner, Kansas.

The Null Restaurant building at 111 S. Main is the next structure to the south. The building's first occupant in the fall of 1896 was Clarence Curtis' City Bakery and Restaurant which offered "all kinds of Bakery goods, confectionery, ice cream, [and] cold drinks." Like Flanders, this building was probably partitioned because Curtis remodeled in 1899 by arranging a ladies ice cream parlor and lunch room in the south room and a men's lunch room in the north. That same year Curtis installed gas lights, the last building on Main to do so. After the City Bakery and Restaurant changed hands once in 1900, Joseph Null purchased the building later that year and leased it to George Reeder. The building burnt again in January 1901 and was

rebuilt by local contractor A.B. Vanderveer. At the time of the fire the C.L. Reeder Bakery and Restaurant occupied the Null building. Although there were several ownership changes between 1902 and 1910, including J.M. Hupp, E.R. Henning, J.L. Fryer, J.J. Vendel, and O. Shimer, the establishment was always known as The City Bakery and Restaurant. Locally famous for baking nearly 400 loaves of bread a day, which sold for twenty-eight loaves for a dollar or six loaves for twenty-five cents in 1910, the bakery was run by the Dever brothers in its heyday between 1910 and 1914. During that time the Devers advertised that the bakery was "open to men and women any time they desire to call but not open to boys and loafers."

In 1917 Bud Cooper bought the City Bakery, and although the name was officially changed to "Cooper's Café" by 1920, along Main it was referred to as "Bud's Place." Before the Volstead Act dried up the nation, Spring Hill men often crossed Main from the Palace Theater after a moving picture show and treated their female companions to ice cream and themselves to a fifteen cent bottle of Budweiser at Bud's. After more ownership changes, which included five years as the "E.L. Wilson Restaurant and Confectionery," the restaurant was sold to Ethel Rittenhouse in 1926. Renamed "The Spring Hill City Café," Rittenhouse put in new canvass awnings and curtains with fringe. She also became widely known for excellent chicken dinners every Sunday. After Rittenhouse moved the café to the McCanse building to the south in 1927, T. G. Hess opened his cash and carry grocery store in the Null building and ran it as a Piggly-Wiggly grocery.

The Wiley building accommodates both 113 and 115 S. Main. A.F. Wiley, insurance agent and notary public, occupied both sides of his new building until Bert Hollenbeck moved his jewelry store from across the street into the north room in October 1898. Hollenbeck put in new large upright showcases and bought a brand new regulator clock because he left his other one behind. During the Christmas season 1899, Hollenbeck advertised ladies watches between \$7.50 and \$25.00, men's watches from \$5.00 to \$25.00, solid gold rings .50 to \$6.00, rings with diamonds, opals, or pearls .75 to \$27.00, as well as silverware, spectacles, clocks, and cameras. In the summer of 1901 Bert Hollenbeck switched locations -- a frequent occurrence over the years on Main -- with Hickson's Barber Shop in the McCanse building. After Hickson moved to Kansas City, E.A. Roofe opened his Tonsorial Parlor in the north room of Wiley in November 1902. Over the next six years Roofe partnered with several other barbers including Wilbur Allen in 1903, Mr. Cassity in 1904, and finally Frank Chase in 1904. Known for their large aquarium and selection of Edison phonographs, Roofe and Chase's barber business was called the "U R Next" shop and because residential housing was tight in Spring Hill in the early years of the twentieth century, Roofe's family lived in the back of shop.

In 1908 Earl Roofe sold his business to C.W. McKenzie and moved with his wife to Boulder, Colorado due to her poor health. But by 1913, he returned to his old shop, and after buying out J.T. Strahl's barbershop, had it repainted, repapered, and linoleum put on the floor. During Spring Hill's "barber war" in the summer of 1917, Roofe advertised that he had cut his price of a shave from fifteen cents to ten and that now a patron could "get shaved four times a week instead of three and save a nickel to spend on coca cola." Perhaps to supplement his income in the face of worsening economic conditions, by 1925 Earl Roofe bought Mossman's real estate and insurance business and set up an office in his barber shop.

In his business in the south room of his building, A.F. Wiley, who owned a frame hardware store on the east side before Samuel Hogue bought him out in 1882, went into the insurance business because it was "one of the interests of the age, and over the globe its protecting power is felt, it being one of the great equalizers of wealth." Wiley represented and wrote policies for Niagara of New York, Shawnee of Topeka, Home of New York, Aetna of Hartford, and American Central of St. Louis. Yet sometime between July 1896 and April 1906, Jim Wikoff acquired the south room and ran a meat market where his family also lived. In 1906 Wikoff sold the market to J.M. Hupp, who lost an eye during a "sham battle on Main between east and west side merchants with roman candles" on July 4, 1902. Hupp ran it as Hupp's City Meat Market and added a new modern refrigerator. After his step-son Mason Morgan briefly ran the market it was sold again to Horace Armsby and became known for years as simply The City Meat Market. In November 1909 another Hupp family member, Ben, partnered with Ralph Hines to run the business.

Over the next four years The City Meat Market changed hands six times before it was bought again by Ralph Hines when he purchased the Wiley building in 1912. With his wife, a licensed creamer after an examination at the Kansas State Agricultural College, the two opened a "cream station" at the market. Hines was well known along Main for making The City Meat Market the cleanest in town and the most vermin free. Flies, mice, and large snakes were traditionally a nuisance on Main, primarily because they could enter through the front screen doors. The Grange store kept a famous tabby cat that various merchants would "borrow" to rid their stores of mice and snakes, but the flies remained a major concern. In 1913 the *New Era* reported that Hines' market had recently been "double screened and made fly proof," believing that, "it will be impossible for a fly to get his head in now." No mention of the mice and snakes was made, but Hines was apparently quite successful because after a small fire in the market in 1916, which ruined his expensive shirt and hat, the *New Era* teased that "who but a butcher could afford a five dollar hat and silk shirt."

Hines eventually found buying and shipping stock more profitable and sold the market to J.E. Wikoff in 1916. Wikoff added a refrigerated display case and by 1921 The City Meat Market advertised Salt Fish, Lake Herring two for five cents, plate and rib roasts ten cents or three pounds for twenty-five cents, and hamburger two pounds for twenty-five cents. That year J.W. Timmons bought the business and expanded it to The City Grocery & Meat Market. In 1927 Timmons moved "The City Grocery & Meat Market" from the Hines building to the north room of the building owned by the Timmons Brothers on the east side. That April, the room was repainted all white and re-opened as Weldon's Variety Store with a "A Big 9c and 19c Sale" featuring dry goods, clothing, stationary, school supplies, toys, and kitchen ware.

Upon completion of the Newton building at 117 S. Main, Henry Adams moved his drug store into the building, advertising the benefits of patent medicines such as Chamberlain's Cough Remedy which cured la grippe, coughs, colds, and whooping cough. It is probable that Adams was joined by another druggist, Tom Davis, for a time in "the large and commodious room" which eventually housed a fine line of queensware, a large stock of groceries, and painting supplies. Between 1896 and 1903 Adams, a "registered prescription druggist," bought the building from Newton for \$1,350, added decorative shelving, wallpapered the interior, and maintained "one of

the neatest and most up-to-date drug stores in Eastern Kansas," not to mention carrying a "large stock of toilet articles and the ONLY stock of wallpaper in Spring Hill." Moreover, Adams hired a young school teacher, Homer Neff, as a clerk in the pharmacy. Upon completion of a pharmacy degree at the University of Kansas, and achieving an average score of 92 (one of the highest in the state) on the state pharmacy exam, Neff eventually bought the pharmacy in 1903 and kept it in the family for two generations.

The enterprising and civic-minded Homer Neff became a pillar of Spring Hill society and a major force in its business community until illness slowed him down considerably in 1928. Committed to being a "progressive" pharmacist and businessman, in the first decade of the twentieth century Neff had the pharmacy repapered, "calsomined and frescoed," and added a soda fountain. In 1907 he advertised his own lemon and vanilla extracts which met the standards of the new Pure Food and Drug Act. That same year Neff apparently bought the first car in Spring Hill, a Ford four cylinder Model S for \$740. In the 1910s he continuously renovated to stay ahead of his major competition, C.E. Bailey, on the east side of Main. In particular, Neff installed a "Becker iceless soda fountain" (built to order), carried a "complete line of cameras and kodaks," enclosed the front windows and put electric cluster lights in each one, placed a Bell Telephone booth in his store, and installed an electric ceiling fan (in fairness most of the businesses on Main were equipped with them by 1919). Always fascinated with automobiles, in the 1920s Neff donated his used Buick touring car to the underfunded Spring Hill Fire Department. As the department had no modern fire truck, the car was converted to be used as such. The town's only fire equipment at the time, two tanks attached to a hand pumper, were mounted on the Buick and the contraption became the town's first motorized fire equipment.

In 1928 Neff suffered a cerebral hemorrhage which forced him to spend less time at what was by that time known as "Neff's Drug and Jewelry Store," as well as resign from the school board. Loren Locke, himself a long-time pharmacist on Main in later years filled in temporarily at the store. Eventually Neff's son Crawford, named for his mother's maiden name, took over the business.

The Sowers building at 119 S. Main is identified as a non-contributing structure, yet it has a significant history regarding the district. After the fire in 1896 the *Spring Hill New Era* reported that they had purchased Lot 9 and would build a new office for the paper there. But when the building was completed that fall, A. C. "Gus" Back moved his harness making business into the south room, specializing in saddles, harnesses, bridles, whips, horse clothing, and turf goods. Apparently partitioned, in 1897 the post office, under the direction of Postmaster Oren Rhinehart, moved into the north room because of convenience. For a time in 1898 Back also rented a little space in his south room to D.S. Curtis who did shoe repair with the only leather stitching machine in town. In 1898 the Sowers building was the first on the west side to be hooked up to gas, and the first to be lighted and heated with gas (several shops on the east side already were). The post office came to be known as The Postoffice News Stand in 1909 because it also carried a large selection of books, post cards, occasion cards, stationary, school books and supplies, and sold subscriptions to periodicals such as the Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan (\$2.75 a year), Good Housekeeping (\$2.75 a year), McClure's (\$1.75 a year), and Woman's Home Companion (\$2.40 a year). Always decorated with fresh flowers and plants, The Postoffice News Stand

became a popular hangout as, much to the postmaster's annoyance, young people congregated there in the afternoon to "spark and honey-fuddle."

In the spring of 1911, the *New Era* reported that, "the partition will be taken out from between the room from where Mr. Back moved and the room occupied by the post office and the entire building will be occupied by P.O. Coons with the post office, news stand, and stationary." When the partition was removed the interior was completely remodeled, the wood work repainted, and walls repapered, which according to the *New Era* "makes Spring Hill about the handsomest and most up-to-date small town Postoffice along the border." The *New Era* also teased that "the lobby will now be large enough to accommodate the youngsters who meet there to bill and coo without interfering with those who are in a hurry to get their mail." Although the postal facility itself only did business one hour each day, between 9:30 to 10:30am, according to the U.S. Postal Service, during May 1911 there were 14,730 pieces of first-class mail handled, 10,560 newspapers, and 302 magazines delivered in Spring Hill. In total there was 31,880 pieces of mail delivered during the month, most all of which by rural carriers. For the remaining years of the period of significance for the nominated district the Sowers building remained the home of The Postoffice News Stand.

The last of the 1896 buildings is the McCanse building at 121 S. Main. When Jeremiah "Jerry" McCanse moved into his new barber shop in September 1896 he was described by the *New Era* as "the proudest colored man in town." His shop, the paper said, "would be an ornament to any town and this city is justly proud of it." Born in Lawrence County, Missouri in 1847, the former slave and Civil War veteran of Company A Regiment 11 of the 113 US Army, moved to Kansas in 1866 and Spring Hill in 1876. Just seven months before his shop opened on Main, McCanse took a short vacation to Mt. Vernon, Missouri to visit his former master for the first time in thirty-five years. In addition to being a popular barber, he also continued to play the drums at local festivals (a skill he apparently used in the war) and served as a member of the school board. McCanse was one of only three barbers in town in 1896 and competition dictated that he charge ten cents for a haircut. It also meant that he had to distinguish his Main street establishment from the other two barber shops elsewhere in town. Immediately upon moving in he painted the interior a sunflower color and "christened it the sunflower shop." He also put a phonograph in his shop to entertain customers.

In 1897 and 1900 barbers John Hodgkins and Mr. Hickson joined McCanse. Sometime in 1900 Hickson probably took over for McCanse as the latter became increasingly ill and sold the building to Bert Hollenbeck, the jeweler. In 1901 the newly named Hickson's Barber Shop and Bert Hollenbeck's jewelry store switched places in the north room of the Wiley building. By January 1903 Jerry McCanse was confined to his home with "dropsy" and died a year later. Before then William Blakeney, a "graduate optician [sic] and a practical jeweler," took over Hollenbeck's jewelry store in 1902. Offering diamonds, watches, clocks, jewelry, silverware, spectacles, and sewing machine supplies, Blakeney's first advertising in the *New Era* articulated the Main Street merchant's ongoing competition with outside business competition, advising the consumer to "Patronize Home Merchants: transients, peddlers and street fakers are interested only in the dollars they take from the community." Even after putting in an "up-to-

date" machine for testing vision -- which cost him \$100 -- Blakeney quit the business and sold everything to J.H. Leighty in 1905. Leighty stayed in the building until 1910 when he sold it to W.J. Allen and went into the "auto livery business" with his brother in Pleasanton, Kansas. W.J. Allen, the "Jeweler and Optomerist [sic]" advertised that he had a number of years of experience as a refractionist and was "registered in Kansas with [the] State Board of Optomery [sic]." Offering a "both subjective and objective" vision test, especially after he installed a new "mediaometer," Allen also did jewelry repair along with carrying fine china and silverware.

The jewelry store changed hands twice in 1917 and 1918, first to Harry A. Pearce and then J.R. Dunlap. During World War I, local entrepreneur Roy Payne purchased the "Pantatorium" from his recently drafted brother Rolla and moved it into the McCanse building, replacing Dunlap's jewelry store. Featuring "French Dry Cleaning," general tailoring, and "Royal Made-to-Order" suits between \$30.00 and \$65.00, the "Pantatorium" then changed hands four times between 1919 and 1920, first sold to Earl Weir, then to Beryl Dickey, then Bertha Graves, and finally back to Payne whose wife ran it in between 1920 and 1925. During Payne's last ownership, F.E. Mossman, a broker in commodities, feed, grain, coal, and real estate, moved from the *New Era* office into the front room of the "Pantatorium." Advertised as the location of Samuels Pantatorium as early as December 1925, the building next housed T.G. Hess' cash and carry grocery business until he swapped locations with Ethel Rittenhouse in the summer of 1928. As the nominated district's period of significance closed, the McCanse building housed Rittenhouse's Spring Hill City Café.

The 1903-1905 Building Period

The last major period of building in the nominated district took place between 1903, when the Spring Hill Banking Company and Masonic Lodge began their "two-part" building at 123 S. Main, and ended when three "one-parts," 110, 112, and 116 S. Main, replaced buildings destroyed by fire. On July 4, 1903 the corner stone for the bank and Mason's building at 123 S. Main was laid with Master W.C. Palmer and H.C. Livermore officiating and Judge W.H. Sheldon delivering the address. In the cornerstone was a time capsule containing the history of Lodge #56 from 1867 to 1903, a history of the Covenant Chapter #98 of the Eastern Star, and a history of the State Bank of Spring Hill. A.B. Vanderveer did the wood work during construction and Ben Wikoff did the plastering, putting a "dead wall" between the hall floor and bank ceiling. The brick sidewalk around the building was done by Ike Wikoff and Fred Mackadanz did the wallpapering. Unlike the "one-parts" on the west side of Main, a tin roof was put on. In January 1904 the ground floor, which housed the bank was described as "up-to-date in every way" with "oak veneer wood, marble base board, and handsome carving." After their new furniture arrived, The Spring Hill Banking Company moved from their "one-part" on the east side of Main into their new building in February 1904. At the time of the move the officers included Loren Crawford, president; George S. Sowers, vice president; A.P. Williams, cashier; and Anna W. Simpson, assistant cashier.

During the district's period of significance, The Spring Hill Banking Company, which billed itself as "The Old Reliable" made a variety of aesthetic and security improvements to their facility due to increased competition from the Farmer's State Bank on the east side of Main. In

1905 they installed the American Bank Protection Company's electrical burglar system. This consisted of lining the vault with a double sheet of chilled steel with insulation in between, placing two bells inside the vault and two ten inch combination fire alarm gongs on the outside of the vault, with a twenty inch bell outside the bank building (which could be heard one and a half miles away). In 1908 a modern manganese steel Mosler safe, with double time locks was added and in 1918 the interior was completely remodeled to include an open reception room in front of the cashier's enclosure. By 1917 The Spring Hill Banking Company offered the convenience of paying county property tax, due by December 20, at the bank and after 1921 the bank provided assistance on the new income tax due to the "Internal Revenue Collector" on March 15.

Perhaps the most exciting event in Spring Hill history took place at the bank in June 1920. After loitering around town all day, a young man named Alfred (or Albert) Gantert of Olathe held cashier Ray Smith and assistant cashier Edna Lemen up at gun point. The masked Gantert locked the two in the vault, stole nearly \$1,000, and fled north up the alley behind the bank on foot. Smith utilized the electrical burglar system installed fifteen years earlier to set off the alarm from inside the vault. Several Main Street merchants who kept guns in their stores for just such emergencies, poured onto the street and gave chase. Gantert, who had robbed the Martin City, Missouri bank a month earlier, initially hid in a deserted farm house northeast of Main. But after being spooked by his pursuers, he fired a couple of shots and ran through a nearby pasture. It was there that Ralph Hines, Main street butcher and grocer, shot and killed the bank robber. All but \$300 of the stolen money was found tucked into Gantert's shirt. After his mother refused to come from Olathe to claim the body, Gantert was buried in an unmarked grave in the Spring Hill cemetery at the county's expense. For his part Hines received rewards totally well over \$1,000 from the Kansas Bankers Association, the Missouri Bankers Association, and the bank's insurance company.

As a direct result of the robbery, that fall a vigilante group known as the "Minute Men" were organized. Admitting any Spring Hill citizen that could get dressed and out their door in one minute flat, the group was armed by the town's two banks with army-surplus rifles and ammunition they jointly purchased. During the 1920s and 1930s, the telephone operator had instructions to ring each member's house when a general alarm sounded on Main (in 1925 the city purchased a "big electric fire siren" and installed it on top of the Spring Hill Banking Company's building for town emergencies). From there members were trained to not answer the phone but proceed to their assigned location in town and carry out their specifically assigned duty.

In a precursor of things to come for the nation, in 1927 The Spring Hill Banking Company closed due to what bank examiners described as "frozen assets" and heavy withdrawals over a period of three months due in part to "local business depression." The town's other bank had failed six years earlier and the sudden closing of The Spring Hill Banking Company, without any warning, created a serious shortage of money in Spring Hill, especially for merchants on Main the day the bank did not open as usual. However, businessmen on Main remained optimistic in the face of this disaster and vowed not to panic or withdraw their assets. Their patience and faith apparently paid off because later in 1927 the bank reorganized as The State Bank of Spring Hill and conducted business throughout the Great Depression.

In August 1905 a fire wiped out three brick buildings on the east side of Main street. By the end of the year local contractor W.S. Boring had rebuilt the Pratt building at 110 S. Main, a key contributing brick "one-part." Upon completion of the new Pratt building in 1905, J.E. Wikoff opened a meat market and lunch counter. The next year Edward Dotson leased the Pratt building and opened the Spring Hill Bakery and Restaurant. After the restaurant moved elsewhere, the newly formed Spring Hill Commercial Club, organized by local merchants and businessmen "for the sole purpose of promoting the interests of Spring Hill and vicinity," leased the building in the fall of 1906. As the projected permanent headquarters of the Commercial Club and its twenty-two charter members, the building was repainted, repapered, and "put in apple pie order" according to the *New Era*. Yet the Club moved to another location within a year and the new firm of Hines Brothers Grocery moved in. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the grocery, operated jointly by Alex and Tom Hines, and later just Tom, remained in this location and provided a good deal of stability to Main street.

Built contiguously to the Pratt building on the south is the Rutter building at 112 S. Main and the Sowers building at 116 S. Main. Both of which are identified as non-contributing. Immediately after the fire in 1905, William Rutter, a long time furniture maker and undertaker in the building before his retirement, put the lot up for sale, advertising "Good foundation; North wall good; irons for front; sufficient brick for rear wall; salvage goes with lot." E. Davis & Son, who took over for Rutter in 1902, purchased the ruins and Lot 17 and hired A.B. Vanderveer to rebuild. The *New Era* reported that along with the adjacent structure to the south "the buildings will be one story brick and will be extended to the alley." By the end of the year Vanderveer had rebuilt the brick commercial "one-parts" at 112 and 116 S. Main.

Throughout the nominated district's period of significance the Rutter building housed a furniture dealership and accompanying undertaking business. After the original occupant, William Rutter, sold to Eli Davis and his son Ralph, the business was known as E. Davis & Son, or as they advertised themselves, "The House With No Expense." In the 1900s and 1910s, the Davis' were among Main Street's most forward looking, and thus in the *New Era's* opinion most respected, businessmen. In addition to offering the best selection of "Quality Kind Furniture" at the lowest prices in town -- in 1904 side boards started at \$10, quartered oak book cases from \$12, mattresses between \$2 and \$11.50, rocking chairs from \$1.95, and iron beds \$4 to \$15 -- the Davis' enticed customers with a variety of promotions and innovations over the years. The store was known for having the best window displays on Main, especially at Christmas. The interior of the store was kept clean and up-to-date, always important for a small town merchant in the early years of the century, with the ceiling and shelving painted white, and a "beautiful straw paper with artistic border" on walls. Though accomplished furniture makers, the Davis' remained progressive funeral directors as well. Ralph's wife Margaret was the only licensed embalmer in town for a number of years. Additionally, in 1910 the business purchased the town's lone ambulance service to go with the undertaking business and in 1914 advertised that they could provide either a "Motor or Horse Drawn Funeral Car" depending on the client's preference.

After the retirement of his father Eli, Ralph sold the business in 1920 to their onetime manager Paul Coons and his partner Jay Young of the Kansas City based Emery, Bird, and Thayer. The new firm of Coons & Young Furniture and Undertakers, continued as a progressive

anchor among Main Street's business community. Billed as "The House of Quality," Coons & Young actually improved on Davis' famous window displays, arranging elaborate scenes representing an idealized room of a home in the north window with the south window occupied by a dignified funeral parlor display. Serving as mayor in 1920, Coons also used the store as the headquarters of many civic events including the autopsy and inquest of bankrobber Alfred (or Albert) Gantert, and the more upbeat Christmas basket exchange for the needy. After he became sole proprietor in 1921, Paul Coons was the first businessman in town to employ new techniques in advertising such as the use of cuddly cartoon raccoons as The Coons Furniture and Undertaking Company's logo and spokesperson. Like his predecessors, Coons also promoted his image as the purveyor of innovative technology, purchasing a "Limousine Casket Coach" (a limousine funeral car), which he advertised in 1924 as "the latest in funeral equipment".

Upon completion of the building at 116 S. Main in 1905, George Sowers leased it to T.E.S. Wilson who that fall left his hardware partner H.V. Divelbliss to open a grocery store. But in early 1906 Wilson died suddenly at age thirty-seven and J.T. Ramsay, a grocer with twenty years experience in Old Town, bought Wilson's stock and moved his grocery store to the Sowers building. The *New Era* marked the occasion by pointing out that the migration of Ramsay & Son "removes the last of the business firms from Old Town." By 1908 Ramsey sold the grocery to A.C. Bunger. Advertising the advantages and affordability of new products such as those from the Heinze company (like Mandalay Sauce for twenty-five cents, Tomato Ketchup - twenty-five cents, India Relish - twenty-five cents, Green Olives - thirty cents, Peppered Mustard - fifteen cents, and Chili Sauce - ten cents) Art Bunger remained in the building until 1913 when he moved into the Odd Fellow's building to the south and formed Bunger and Nelson Grocery. At that time J.W. Bingham opened a produce market in the building vacated by Bunger and carried poultry, eggs, cream, and butter.

In 1919 W.C. Harp and his son opened an electrical repair shop in the building, carrying electrical appliances and fixtures as well as advertising electrical work done in the home. After only two weeks in business, the Harps were bought out by the Olathe Electric Company, who were at the time running power lines to Spring Hill, and needed a local base of operations. Unfortunately the historical record is sparse concerning the Sowers building after 1919.

The Importance of Being Progressive

After perhaps Spring Hill's most prosperous year in 1906, the *New Era* described what was increasingly perceived to be a crossroads for the town. Keenly aware of the region's economic transformation from an "agrarian hinterland to a suburban community," many in the small town acknowledged the developing suburban ideal in the county and pondered their place in it. Once again the *New Era* helped articulate the anxiety felt by local businessmen, farmers, and civic leaders regarding the town's future. Was Spring Hill to "become one of the chief cities and manufacturing centers in Eastern Kansas," the paper mused, or perhaps, "We will soon be riding to Kansas City in electric cars, and then we will become a suburb of Kansas City, and our cheap gas will attract city people seeking suburban homes where schools and churches and moral influences are the very best." Though far from reconciled, by 1910 the *New Era* revealed which direction they, and the business community they professed to speak for, were leaning in the

autonomy versus suburb debate. "Come to our town, the metropolis of the county," the *New Era* crowed, "and we'll show you a model town – one that will make any other town of its size look like 40 cents in Chinese money. We'll show you our schools and churches, our prosperous fraternal societies, our solid business concerns. We'll call your attention to the appearance of the people, their dress, intelligence, health and smiles of prosperous and happy lives. We'll show you many successful business men and farmers. We'll show you a lot of pretty girls, full of life and energy, who are fairly bubbling over with praise for this section of our great commonwealth."

The apprehension over the prospect of becoming nothing more than a suburb of Kansas City, was but one facet of a larger dialectic woven into the tapestry of the audacious little town. As the nation as a whole struggled to reconcile its self image in the face of radical change brought on by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and an economic revolution, the architectural and social history of downtown Spring Hill affords an excellent case study of how the national tensions between rural and urban, agrarian and industrial, tradition and modernity manifested themselves in rural Kansas around the turn of the century. As the center of the town's commercial and public life, Main street's history is much more than a collection of charming stories of small town life. For nearly forty years the nominated district was the primary stage where Spring Hill residents engaged in numerous public rituals, displays, and spectacles which, when taken cumulatively, reveal a great deal about how common folks struggled to negotiate these powerful, predominantly dichotomous, national forces within their daily lives.

As the city's polling place, social center, and home of the overtly politically conscious *New Era* after 1912, Main Street was the physical location where Spring Hill's and the nation's major political issues manifested themselves from the Gilded Age to the New Deal. In the nineteenth century, rivalries between "prohibs" and wets and Republicans and Populists (sometimes referred to as "Pops," or later "Demopops" and "Popocrats" after the election of 1896) dominated local political discourse along the businesses of Main. On the issue of temperance, which traditionally Spring Hill strongly supported, Main Street merchants cautioned their customers on the evils of "the liquor habit." The *New Era* also periodically offered advice to help residents get off alcohol – including the suggestion that "the victim" eat as many tomatoes with salt as possible every day until they found liquor made them sick. In the evenings and on busy Saturday nights when several hundred people might gather to shop and socialize, residents discussed the merits of free silver, direct election of Senators, a sub-treasury plan, and eventually the Spanish-American War. In the pivotal presidential election of 1896 between William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley, citizens utilized the new Australian ballots recently mandated by law when casting their vote at one of the newly completed buildings on the west side of Main.

Over entry into the First World War, Spring Hill residents were decidedly behind President Woodrow Wilson and rallied to the cause of "Making the World Safe for Democracy" in the way he hoped they would. The social season in Spring Hill had traditionally revolved around July 4th and Memorial Day, and during America's comparatively brief foray in the war these two holidays became even more significant observances of civic religion. Banners and bunting lined Main and upwards of a thousand area residents turned out along the street each year for picnics, parades, music, fireworks, and much to the chagrin of civic leaders, various clandestine kegs of beer. As the war ground on, all businesses but three on Main flew flags every

day to show their support for the twenty area men serving in the armed forces. The war also altered the business and social patterns of Main. During January and February 1918, businesses along Main patriotically adhered to county-wide regulations which set business hours to conserve fuel. For those two winter months all retail stores had to close at 5:30pm except on Saturday when they could stay open till 9:30pm; barber shops could be open between 7:30am and 6:00pm except Saturday when they could stay open till 10:30pm; drug stores could be open between 7:30am and 8:30pm except Saturday when they could be open till 10:30pm; restaurants could be open between 6:00am and 8:00pm except Saturday when they could be open till 10:30pm, banks could be open between 10:00am and 3:00pm; and theaters could only have one show during the week and regular features on Saturday, while lodges and dance halls were closed completely. Also, due to Spanish influenza, Johnson County banned public gatherings during November 1918 which compelled Spring Hill to close its school, church, moving picture show, and in turn kept hundreds away from Main Street.

Committed to being progressive, and confident of their "metropolitan airs," savvy businessmen along Main between the 1880s and 1920s, prided themselves in being "up-to-date" and wise to the ways of an increasingly urban and modern America. Not only was it made illegal to spit tobacco on the sidewalk, ride a bicycle on the sidewalk, or shoot a catapult or sling-shot within the city limits (with a fine not to exceed \$5.00) because they were seen as too pedestrian, technologically, Main Street attempted to keep pace with many of the innovations of the day. In 1898, the first gas street light in the town was installed at the corner of Main and Pine, and ten more were installed along Main the next year. Donated by the gas company which drilled the town's first gas well, the street lights were maintained by the town lamplighter, Daniel Bingham, who lit them every evening and extinguished them every morning using a 36" metal wand. With children tagging along behind his small spring wagon, Bingham was a fixture along Main until 1911. That year, a bond issue for a municipal electric light plant was passed. Initially there were only twenty-five consumers wired for electricity, but by the end of 1911 the electric company installed "50 60 watt series Tungsten lamps with two clusters of three lights each for Main street." Before 1915 electric service was shut off across the city at midnight and turned back on at 5:00am. Many residents used this system as a sort of alarm clock to help them get up each morning when the lights came on. However, for safety concerns, businessmen along Main were vocal proponents for "all night service" due to the need to keep their street lights on. After twenty-four hour electric service was established in 1915, those same merchants then secured steam heated stores on Main as the next necessary improvement in 1916.

Perpetually battling the "mail order evil" and traveling peddlers which drew their rural customers away, Spring Hill merchants also sought to employ modern business practices such as advertising, marketing, and promotional strategies to attract consumers to Main street. Some like E. Davis & Son Furniture and Undertaking held promotions such as "Edison Week" in 1915, where they played classical selections in their music room on Edison's new "diamond disc machine;" advertised as "Mr. Edison's Most Wonderful and Favorite Invention." Others, like the Grange store, arranged contests which required patrons to guess the number of corn kernels in a jar for a free give away. Catching the "flood-tide of the bicycle craze" in 1896, many Main merchants added the latest selection of bicycles to their stock, as they did with colored shoe strings when they became the rage in 1901, and thermoses and electric flashlights in 1915. In 1903 E.A.

Roofe's Tonsorial Parlor amused customers with a large aquarium filled with goldfish and a selection of Edison phonographs while they waited. Between 1901 and 1908 Main Street businesses hosted traveling shows which frequently featured dogs and ponies, monkeys, speakers and singers for prohibition, a mummified "shrunk" female head from South America, and on one occasion a huge octopus. The Spring Hill Concert Band -- made up of local citizens -- gave open air concerts on Saturday nights beginning in 1908.

Technology Brings Change

By the early 1920s, the novelty of radio was used to attract potential customers to Main Street. In 1922, Kansas City boasted five radio stations: WDAF, WHB, WOQ, WPE, and WMAJ. Their daily programming included stock market prices, livestock and grain market prices (both Kansas City and Chicago) throughout the day and in the afternoon various musical programs, a woman's hour, weather, educational hour, and children's hour followed by the evening concert sponsored by the *Kansas City Star*. Merchants like E. Davis & Son and E.Y. Gay Hardware allowed customers to listen while they shopped and of course offered the latest models. In 1924 Gay tuned in the World Series on a new radio at his hardware store for the first time and each afternoon a large crowd of people gathered to listen to reports of the games as they came in "play by play." This began something of a tradition as people continued to gather around the front of Gay's store, either standing or sitting on the sidewalk, window ledge, or in parked cars to listen to baseball games on the Kansas City stations.

Downtown Spring Hill's enthusiasm for sports was not limited to listening to the wireless. In the 1880s and 1890s the *New Era* reported that football was "so fascinating that the merchants leave their business to get in a few lively kicks." The paper later wrote that "After business hours Main st. is turned into a ball ground and the fun begins," which prompted several merchants to purchase two balls (\$1.75 and \$3.75) for their collective use. By the mid-1890s, however, most Main businessmen on the west side were becoming fearful of football games on Main Street because of their new plate glass windows and were relieved when organized high school football began in Spring Hill in the fall of 1896. Likewise, Spring Hill developed baseball fever and followed several local teams over the years known as first the "Grays" and later the "Brownies." Though not played in the nominated district like football, baseball was still a tradition on Main as businesses supported teams like "Fryer's Colts" which was sponsored and coached by then Spring Hill Bakery and Restaurant owner J.L. Fryer. Perhaps more importantly, beginning in 1897, and lasting well into the 1920s, merchants from the west side squared off against those from the east side in an annual baseball showdown. The game, usually held in June, drew large crowds and occasioned all the stores along Main being closed. Describing the 1897 game in which the east side beat the west 23-19, the *New Era* playfully commented that "it was funnier than a cage of monkeys to see the soft-handed fellows play ball."

All these strategies and gimmicks apparently worked. Just after WW I, on a typically busy Saturday night when merchants along Main stayed open until 10:00pm to accommodate the farmers from all over the area who brought their families to town, the *New Era* reported eighty-two automobiles, twenty-nine buggies and carriages, one saddle horse, and an estimated 700 to 800 people in the one block area.

Just as with radio, downtown Spring Hill confronted other new trends and technologies and incorporated them into their pre-existing notions of business, community, and tradition (the 1897 sighting of an "airship" by two men who saw a light floating in the sky near town is ripe for this type of analysis). In 1904 an automobile drove down Main and "caused all who saw it to rubberneck," but as the *New Era* told it, "it was like a meteor and passed almost as quickly." Two years later the novelty was still there as an automobile reportedly costing \$1,500 got a flat on Main and caused quite a stir. Yet as automobile ownership slowly rose -- a merchant on Main was the first person in Spring Hill to own a car -- the business district adapted. By 1913 "speeding" down Main at between twenty-five to thirty miles an hour was seen as a major problem, and so a speed ordinance was passed which set the speed limit at ten mph in town. In addition to E.Y. Gay's Hardware store offering parts and service for Ford cars, the town's first true filling station, The Spring Hill Oil Company, opened on the corner of Main and Union in 1924.

Spurred by the increasingly central role of the automobile in retail commerce and because neighboring towns were doing so, by the end of the 1920s Main Street businessmen, led by the *New Era*, were crusading for Main to be paved. "Main street looks more like a barn yard than the main business block of a progressive town," the *New Era* lamented in its editorials. Most townspeople agreed, and this initiative received strong support from those who were also tiring of the mess the mixture of oil and gravel created when applied to Main periodically to keep the dust down. Demonstrating their concern, in 1915 when a "Good Roads" protest group from Kansas City drove twenty-three new automobiles around the metropolitan area to make people aware of the need for new modern roads, Main Street merchants stretched a rope across Main and compelled them to make an unscheduled stop in Spring Hill. Finally in September 1929, Main, Union, and Cherry streets were paved, prompting a street dance and carnival to commemorate the occasion.

The automobile also affected local observances of Halloween and Christmas. Since at least 1870, Main Street was the preferred depository of all the items which had been temporally "stolen" on Halloween as a prank. On November 1, the street was usually filled with a variety of items ranging from personal possessions to farm implements and livestock, not to mention numerous people attempting to reclaim them. However, by the mid-1910s, more automobiles were turning up on Main after Halloween which prompted the merchants to hire a night watchman for \$2.50 a night to keep an eye on Main. Much to the dismay of young residents this effectively put an end to Main's hallowed place in the festivities.

Christmas was affected by the automobile too. But the ways in which it was celebrated on Main Street reflect larger historical trends including the sentimentalization of Christmas begun in the Victorian era and a growing awareness of a "social gospel" as a reaction to the abuses of industrialization. The first organized community celebration took place around a Christmas tree in the middle of Main in 1916. Decorated with large lights and tinsel, the tree was the backdrop of a Christmas eve program which focused on the children of Spring Hill. After a welcoming speech by the Mayor, the school band and choir led the crowd of between 1,200 and 1,500 (the population of Spring Hill was around 700 at the time) in renditions of "Joy to the World,"

"There's a Song in the Air," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," and "Silent Night." The large crowd, "which filled and jammed the entire block on Main street," then helped the children welcome Santa Clause. The climatic moment arrived when "Old Santa and Missus Claus drove into Main street in their automobile and distributed the treats to the children." These treats included 500 boxes of candy for all the kids, but also for the first time, Santa gave out baskets which had been prepared with various provisions (usually a combination of chickens, turkeys, fruits, cakes, pies, corn meal, bacon, and/or cash) for needy families donated by Main Street merchants. Variations of this program were repeated throughout the 1920s. By 1925, the newly formed Chamber of Commerce organized Main merchants to place a small Christmas tree in front of every store and the city wired them with red, green, and blue electric light bulbs. Additionally, each store on both sides of Main created displays with colored lights and Christmas scenes in their large plate glass windows using electric Christmas lights inside and out. Staying open until 8:00pm during the holiday season, these smaller displays and the community Christmas tree (which in some years was located to the south of the bank) created a very bright and festive business district after dark.

As with the nation as a whole, the 1920s created unique cultural tensions in Spring Hill which again often manifested themselves most fully within the nominated district. Spring Hill stumbled out of the gate economically after WW I, but after 1921 merchants were optimistic that the worst was over. A favorite advertising ploy along Main was to offer goods and services at "pre-war prices" as a way to stimulate sales. In some cases it must have worked as Roy Payne, a local businessman who ran several stores along Main over the years, moved his family to developer J.C. Nichols exclusive County Club district in Kansas City. In 1919 the Hal Stanley Post of the American Legion – named after the first man from the vicinity (Gardner) to die in WWI – was organized by local veterans, many of whom were Main Street businessmen. It initially met in the Grange Hall, but moved around to various locations along Main before a permanent home was found. In 1924 a Ku Klux Klan meeting was held on a farm south of town, and to whip up support a parade of twenty-five cars filled with Klansmen drove south down Main with the two lead cars having a flaming cross mounted on them. Finding little support in Spring Hill, local Klansmen never again had such a high profile. That same year, Spring Hill "girls" began adopting the "flapper," or "bobbed hair look," which along with their dress and "exhuberance[sic]" caused quite a stir on Main.

Boom to Bust

However, typical of many farm communities in the Midwest, with depressed farm prices making only modest increases and inflation causing concern, merchants along Main began to feel the pinches of the Great Depression years before the stock market crash in 1929. In fact, June 1924 marked the first time the *New Era* mentioned the word "depression" while admitting that Spring Hill's economy was weak. With both banks on Main closing (one never to re-open), the largest retail store quitting business after fifty years, a major drought beginning in 1926, and the appearance of more hobos and "Hoboettes" along the tracks, Main Street began its long decline. The Depression of the 1930s, symbolically begun by the closing of the Grange store in 1928 for this nomination, marked the end of New Town as the commercial center of Spring Hill. In the end, a combination of low farm prices and drought (which meant many local farmers failed while

others had to barter or trade in-kind for consumer goods), paved roads between Paola and Olathe which allowed for easier access to these commercial centers, and an increase in locals working in Kansas City and nearby towns undermined the importance of the nominated district. By the end of 1940s only a few businesses remained and the district was increasingly forgotten.

Nevertheless, the properties included in the nominated district comprise the historical commercial and social heart of a small northeastern Kansas town, and surrounding rural areas, between 1886 and 1928. Architecturally, these properties maintain their overall integrity, making them unique examples of two types of commercial architecture becoming more rare due to pressure from development. Also, in their style, massing, and location, they are significant because they chronicle the growth of a new commercial philosophy accompanying industrialization and urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th century and reflect the application of late Victorian commercial architectural sensibilities in smaller towns. Moreover, the story of this historic business district is much more than a collection of charming stories of small town life. Sometimes the particularities of larger national trends and tensions can best be examined in the relatively fixed environment of the local community. In this way, the historical significance of the Spring Hill Downtown Historic District is that it affords an exceptional case study of how small town Kansans in the early twentieth century struggled to negotiate powerful, predominantly dichotomous, historic forces within their daily lives. First, within the context of the state's period of railroad construction and town building between the 1880s and early twentieth century, the economic development of Main Street speaks directly to the railroad's unprecedented ability to shape the economic future of small, predominantly agricultural communities in Kansas. But that was but one facet of the nominated district's history. As the central stage on which a small rural town publicly struggled to adapt to the impact of technology and market forces reconfiguring the agricultural ideal, while at the same time distinguishing itself from area rivals, the story of Main Street between the 1886 and 1928 is also characteristic of the unwavering economic optimism, faith in progress, and civic "boosterism" found in America during this era. Perhaps most importantly though, as the nation as a whole struggled to reconcile its self image in the face of radical change brought on by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and an economic revolution, Main Street was the primary stage where Spring Hill residents engaged in numerous public rituals, displays, and spectacles which offer insight into larger dynamics and tensions between urban versus rural, industrial versus agrarian, and tradition versus modernity

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